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ABSTRACT

Research showing a lack of upward social mobility for most Hispanics in the United States sometimes blames Hispanic parents and culture for the failure. According to the Wisconsin Status Attainment Model, parents' and students' aspirations are important predictors of educational and occupational attainment. In contrast, statistics summarized in this report show that, after controlling for social class, Hispanics have higher educational aspirations for their children than white parents. Hispanic and White students of both sexes have similar aspirations. But the high aspirations of Hispanics do not translate into more education or higher status occupations. Hispanic males and females are disproportionately found in the lower status occupations when compared to Whites. The difference between expectation and attainment is greater for those whose parents are of Hispanic origin. These findings question the reliability of the "cultural deficit" and Wisconsin model in explaining the educational and occupational attainment of Hispanics. The following questions are raised for further study: (1) what school characteristics and processes affect the educational attainment of Hispanics? (2) what is the effect of those unfulfilled dreams on the individual and society? and (3) what are the schools' policy options for overcoming this mismatch? Thirty-four references are cited. (PS)

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EDUCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AND ATTAINMENT
FOR LATINO PARENTS AND STUDENTS

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH AND SELECTED TABLES

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A Paper Presented to the
National Council of La Raza Conference
Education Institute for Hispanic School Board Members

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Summary of Findings
on
Educational and Occupational Aspirations and Attainment for
Latino Parents and Students

Introduction

- * Some research has suggested that the "American Dream" of upward social mobility is a myth for most Latinos in the United States (Featherman and Hauser, 1978; Garcia and Maldonado, 1982; Karabel and Halsey, 1979; Kerbo, 1983; Ryan, 1981; Snipp and Tienda, 1984; Tienda, 1981).
- * Utilizing a "cultural deficit" model, some social science research has placed the blame for this lack of mobility on the Latino culture, the Latino family, and specifically Latino parents. It should be noted that much of this research is based on small, impressionistic samples (Heffernan, 1955; Heller, 1966; Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961; Madsen, 1964; Rubel, 1966; Schwartz, 1971; Sowell, 1981; Zintz, 1969).
- * The Wisconsin status attainment model is one of the most widely used paradigms that explains the process of social mobility. (Haller and Portes, 1973; Sewell et. al., 1969; Sewell et. al., 1970; Sewell and Hauser, 1975; Sewell and Shah, 1968). (see Diagram 1).
- * According to the Wisconsin model, parent and student aspirations are important predictors of educational and occupational attainment (Grebler et. al., 1970; Haller and Portes, 1973; Laosa, 1982; Marjoribanks, 1979; Sewell et. al., 1969; Sewell et. al., 1970; Sewell and Hauser, 1975; Sewell and Shah, 1968). (see Diagram 1).

Educational Attainment and Aspirations

- * Whether one uses achievement data (i.e. test scores) or attainment data (i.e. number of years of school completed), Latinos do poorer in school than Euro Americans (Orum, 1985; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 a & b). (see Tables 1 and 2).
- * In spite of the fact that only 7% of Latinos receive more than four years college, 61% of Latino parents dream that their children will receive more than a college education. On the other hand, 17% of Whites receive more than four years of college, while 54% of White parents aspire to more than a college education for their children. Before controlling for social class, it appears that Latino parents have higher educational aspirations for their children than White parents (see U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 a & b; and Sanchez A. and D. Cardoza, 1984). (see Table 1).

- * In spite of the real differences in educational attainment, Latino and White students of both sexes have similar educational aspirations. For instance, 45% of Latino males aspire to more than four years of college, while 44% of White males have similar aspirations. For Latino females, 44% aspire to a college education, while 48% of White females have similar dreams. When you control for the students' social class, minorities expect significantly more education than do whites (see Crowley and Shapiro, 1982). (see Table 2)

Occupational Attainment and Aspirations

- * The data show that Latino males and females are disproportionately found in the lower status occupations when compared to Whites. Barrera has documented the existence of these patterns for the last fifty years (see Barrera, 1979; and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 a & b). (see Tables 3 and 4).
- * The data show that 12% of Mexican-origin males have high status white collar occupations, while 75% of the parents have these high status expectations for their sons. In addition, 10% of Mexican-origin females have high status white collar occupations, while 53% of the parents have similar expectations for their daughters. It seems apparent that while Mexican-origin parents' expectations are high, the difference between parent expectations and the actual occupational attainment is very large. Also, the difference in parental expectations for sons and daughters is significant (see D. Solorzano, 1986; and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 a & b). (see Table 3).
- * In spite of the low occupational attainment of Latinos, 45% of Latino male students and 49% of White males have high status white collar aspirations. In addition, 36% of Latino females and 41% of White females aspire to these high status occupations. When social class is controlled, minority youth of both sexes have consistently higher occupational status aspirations than their white counterparts (see Shapiro and Crowley, 1982). (see Table 4).

Conclusions

- * Contrary to the "cultural deficit" model, the current findings lead to the conclusion that Latino students and parents have very high educational and occupational dreams. In addition, these high aspirations do not translate into more education or higher status occupations. These findings begin to question the reliability of the "cultural deficit" and Wisconsin status attainment models in explaining the educational and occupational attainment of Latinos.

- * In order to explain the low educational and occupational attainment of Latinos, these findings suggest that researchers and policy makers examine other factors besides the individual student, their parents, or their cultural background. For instance, the focus can shift to the schools and we can ask the question; what school characteristics and processes affect the educational attainment of Latino students? This question would allow the researcher to focus on the relationship between segregated, overcrowded, and underfinanced schools; school staffing, curriculum, and tracking patterns; and teacher/parent/student attitude and interaction patterns, on the educational achievement and attainment of Latino students. Some research seems to suggest that these characteristics are directly related to educational attainment of Latino students (Espinoza, 1986; R. Solorzano, 1986).
- * The discrepancy between the low educational and occupational attainment and the high educational and occupational aspirations of Latinos suggests the following question: What are the affects of these unfulfilled dreams on the individual in particular and society in general? We know little about the impact of the aspiration/attainment mismatch on Latino students and parents. However, Carnoy and Levin (1985) have suggested that such an aspiration/job mismatch can lead to such problems as job dissatisfaction, lower worker productivity, employee turnover, alcoholism and drug abuse, and related issues of quality control at the worksite.
- * What are the schools' policy options on this aspiration/attainment mismatch? A first policy option is to bring these students and their parents back to educational and occupational "reality." In this option the schools serve function of "cooling out" the students' educational and occupational aspirations by exposing them to a curriculum that prepares them for a "realistic" educational and occupational future. A second policy option is to reinforce the schools' role as a democratic institution. -In this option schools serve as institutions that extend opportunity, mobility, equality, democratic participation, and expansion of the rights for all students (see Carnoy and Levin, 1985).

Diagram 1

WISCONSIN STATUS ATTAINMENT MODEL

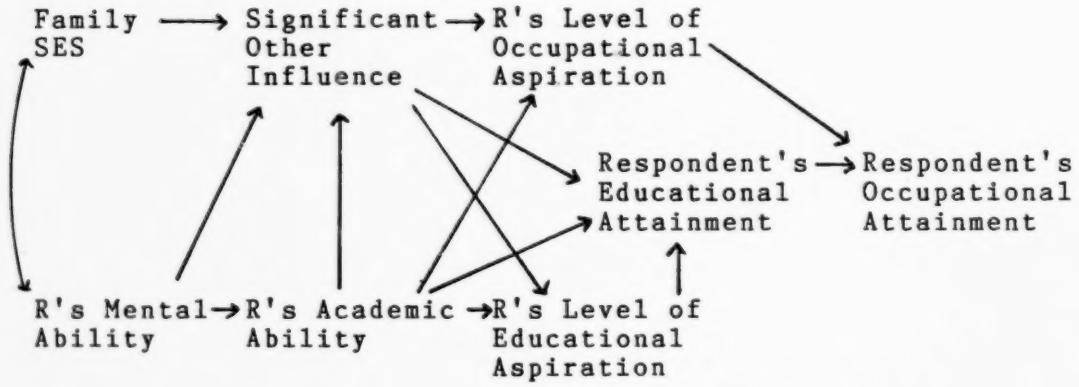


Table 1

Educational Attainment and Parent Aspirations
By Ethnic Origin
(Percentage Distributions)

<u>Education</u>	<u>Latino</u>		<u>White</u>	
	<u>Att</u>	<u>Asp</u>	<u>Att</u>	<u>Asp</u>
Less than H.S.	58%	7%	31%	2%
4 yrs of H.S. or more	42	93	69	93
4 yrs of College or more	7	61	17	54
Median Yrs of Schooling	10.3		12.5	

Source: Overall attainment adapted from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980a. Table E. Parents' educational aspirations adapted from A. Sanchez and D. Cardoza, 1984. Table 1. Median years of Schooling taken from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980b. Table 238.

Table 2

Educational Attainment and Student Aspirations By Sex and Ethnic Origin
(Percentage Distributions)

<u>Education</u>	<u>Males</u>				<u>Females</u>			
	<u>Latino</u>		<u>White</u>		<u>Latino</u>		<u>White</u>	
	<u>Att</u>	<u>Asp</u>	<u>Att</u>	<u>Asp</u>	<u>Att</u>	<u>Asp</u>	<u>Att</u>	<u>Asp</u>
< than H.S.	58%	7%	30%	2%	58%	4%	32%	2%
> than H.S.	42	93	70	96	68	98	68	98
> than Coll	8	45	21	44	5	48	13	48
Median Yrs of School	10.4		12.6		10.2		12.5	

Source: Educational attainment adapted from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980a. Table 7. Students' aspirations adapted from J.E. Crowley and D. Shapiro, 1982. Table 1. Median years of Schooling taken from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980b. Table 238.

Table 3

Mexican-origin Occupational Attainment and Parent Expectations
by Sex of Child
(Percentage Distributions)

Occupational Status	For Sons		For Daughters	
	Att	Exp	Att	Exp
White Collar	20%	80%	46%	84%
High	12	75	10	53
Low	8	5	36	31
Blue Collar	62%	13%	28%	1%
High	22	13	2	1
Low	40	0	26	0
Service	13%	7%	23%	15%
Farm	6%	0%	2%	0%

Source: Occupational attainment adapted from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980a. Table 10. Occupational expectations are adapted from D. Solorzano, 1986. Table 22.

Table 4

Occupational Attainment and Student Aspirations
By Ethnic Origin and Sex
(Percentage Distributions)

Occupational Status	Males				Females			
	Latino		White		Latino		White	
	Att	Asp	Att	Asp	Att	Asp	Att	Asp
White Collar	23%	47%	43%	52%	47%	54%	65%	53%
High	14	45	31	49	11	36	23	41
Low	9	2	12	2	36	18	42	12
Blue Collar	58%	32%	45%	28%	28%	3%	14%	4%
High	21	21	21	19	2	1	2	2
Low	37	11	24	9	26	2	12	2
Service	13%	4%	9%	2%	23%	8%	20%	7%
Farm	5%	2%	4%	3%	2%	0%	1%	0%
Not Specified		2%		1%		2%		2%
Homeworker		2%		2%		23%		26%
Don't Know		12%		12%		10%		8%

Source: Occupational attainment adapted from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980a. Table 10. Students' occupational aspirations adapted from D. Shapiro and J.E. Crowley, 1982. Table 3.

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